

JOHN A. YARMUTH
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CHAIRMAN



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May 6, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a Member of the Kentucky Congressional Delegation, I am writing you to express my concerns over the continued issues surrounding the supply chain for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other critical medical supplies. Through Project Air Bridge, and their coordination with private companies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has helped deliver essential medical equipment from other countries. States and health care providers, however, are still struggling to obtain these life-saving resources. Now that the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is depleted and not being replenished it is imperative that the federal government take additional steps to more effectively combat this COVID-19 pandemic. I, therefore, ask that you instruct FEMA to direct all incoming equipment from Project Air Bridge to the Strategic National Stockpile.

According to FEMA, supplies arriving through Project Air Bridge's efforts are evenly distributed between areas severely impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak and private markets. The problem with this system is that health care providers that are treating COVID-19 patients, but are not in "hot spots," have been unable to procure needed PPE for their patients and medical professionals. The private market supply chain they are forced to rely on is completely broken, with hospitals in every state throughout the country bidding against each other, and against states, for very limited supplies of PPE. As a result, prices for masks, gowns, and other desperately needed equipment have increased in cost by as much as 1,000 percent. The fact that taxpayers' dollars are being used to fund Project Air Bridge and that half of those medical supplies are going into the private market where health care providers are forced to pay for these mark ups is nonsensical.

The SNS has been the most dependable source of critical equipment during this crisis. Unfortunately, it is depleted, and FEMA is not replenishing it. I believe this is a mistake, and one that can be remedied by sending all the supplies from Project Air Bridge to the stockpile where

its established and highly effective distribution system can be used to help solve both issues with distribution and exorbitant prices.

With reports that the next wave of the coronavirus will be far more dire, it is critical that we ensure our SNS is sufficiently replenished before that happens. CDC Director Redfield recently noted that the second round will be even more difficult than what we are currently going through because it will likely coincide with the start of flu season. We need to do everything in our power to ease the strain on health care system, which includes having a fully stocked SNS.

As our health care professionals fight to slow the spread of COVID-19, we must also do all we can to ensure that these individuals are equipped with everything they need. That should include using the effectiveness of the SNS to allow hospitals across the nation to more easily acquire critically needed medical equipment. By resupplying the SNS with equipment arriving through the taxpayer funded Project Air Bridge, you will help our states and providers quickly receive the supplies they desperately need to keep their communities safe.

The results would be a safer medical workforce and a stronger national response. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Yarmuth', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

cc: FEMA Administrator Peter T. Gaynor